

# ***Resilience and Risk Reduction***

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## **Comprehensive Resilience Modules**

**Spiritual Dimension**  
**“Making Meaning”**

***Building a Resilient and Ready Force***

# Overview of Making Meaning



It's hard to understand why bad things happen, why life is often unfair, and what the purpose of life is.



You have the power to 'make positive meaning' of life challenges, conflicts with others, personal weaknesses, failures, unfair treatment by others, and devastating human error.



Challenges can take different shapes and may leave you confused, feeling alone in the dark... emotionally and spiritually.



Making positive meaning' helps us to shed some light on difficult situations.



You can become a stronger Soldier and individual by going through these events and dealing with them.



Managing expectations as we go through these trying situations so that we don't blame ourselves for things that are out of our control.

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# Meaning When Challenged



Soldiers experience a lot of circumstances that can cause spiritual struggles.



We see disturbing situations and are sometimes faced with moral dilemmas we aren't as likely to face in civilian life.



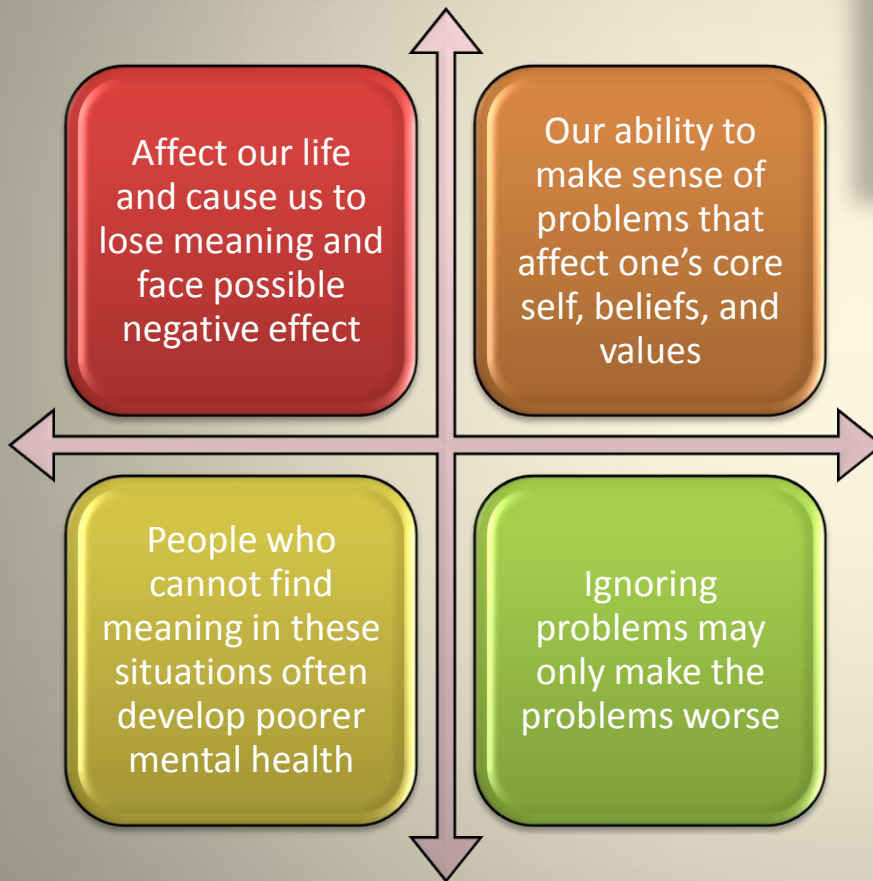
These spiritual struggles include the weight that comes with not being close to your family and friends for long periods.

Because of the unique nature of military life, it is particularly important to have ways to make sense of situations that are difficult to understand.

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# Problems Related to Lost Meaning

*Not dealing with our spiritual struggles can affect:*



**Struggles of the human spirit can lead to:**

- ☐ Hopelessness and serious problems
- ☐ Losing touch with your core self
- ☐ Lack of discipline
- ☐ Trouble with superiors
- ☐ Combat fatigue
- ☐ Alcoholism or drug abuse
- ☐ Thoughts of suicide.

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# Suicide



- ❑ One sign of struggles of the human spirit is loss of hope, which can lead you to thoughts of suicide.



Thoughts about suicide can happen when Soldiers feel they have lost their sense of meaning and purpose in life



Soldiers need resources to help them regain a sense of meaning when they experience struggles

The process of making meaning out of difficult circumstances can transform struggles into something positive - or protect you from losing hope

If you find yourself or a fellow Soldier:

Losing touch, struggling spiritually, abusing alcohol or drugs, showing a lack of discipline

Having trouble with a superior, experiencing combat fatigue, or thinking of suicide

It is extremely important to turn to your battle buddy or Commander for help

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# Positive Meaning Making



There will be times that are difficult, that seem to push you to the end of your resources.

- Find strength to hang on until the problem passes
- Learn how to benefit from your experiences



You can find positive ways to understand even the most troubling situations.

- Develop your human spirit
- Reinforce your core beliefs and values



Increasing your meaning making resources can help you overcome stressful experiences

- Positive experiences from challenges can be adaptive, healthy, and an important part of resilience.
- There may be times when it is harder to build meaning from difficult times

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# Positive Meaning Making Strategies

- ☐ There are many life situations that leave us wondering 'why'?
- ☐ Why is this happening to me?
- ☐ why do good people have bad things happen to them?

Sense of Mission

Time of Testing

Human Destructiveness

Imperfect World

Ultimate Justice

Growth Experience

Greater Purpose

Developing Gratitude



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# Identifying Positive Meaning Making Strategies

Sense of Mission	Meaning can be found in having a mission .	Having a mission can help you feel better about circumstances.	Your mission can come from the Army, job and other areas of your life.	You can rely on your mission to help you push forward.
Time of Testing	Challenges can be opportunities to show your human spirit or core self.	It isn't until you pass through the fire that you find out what your made of.	You might also have other values that are important to you .	“ Adversity is like a strong wind. It tears away all but the things that cannot be torn, so we see ourselves as we really are.” Arthur Golden
Human Destructiveness	Sometimes people really do want to hurt others.	Others are hurt when we give into our destructive feelings.	Human Destructiveness can help explain why some tragedies happen.	A Soldier with integrity wants to build a better world.
Imperfect World	We can understand our challenges as a result of imperfection in the world.	Soldiers should not hold themselves to impossible standards.	Soldiers can strive for their goals in spite of imperfection.	
Ultimate Justice (Some Soldiers believe)	That all wrongs will eventually be made right.	Legal authorities or a greater power might punish destructive actions.	Justice will ultimately be served can help them cope with injustice.	Innocent victims might be repaid for their suffering either in this life or after.
Growth Experience	Challenges teach Soldiers important lessons.	Soldiers can learn strategies for avoiding or handling situations.	Research shows that this point of view is tied to better mental health.	
Developing Gratitude	Gratitude is another meaning making strategy.	Gratitude can also put current troubles in perspective.	Hard times can help you appreciate what you have and learn what is important in life.	“Sleep, riches, and health to be truly appreciated must be interrupted.” John Paul Freidrich Richter
Greater Purpose (Some Soldiers believe)	In a greater power or purpose in the universe	They may trust that their struggles have a larger meaning.	Believing in a greater power gives confidence their situation is under control	

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# Module Activity #1

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- ☐ In this activity, consider how people can make meaning.
- ☐ Read the following examples and come up with at least two different meaning-making strategies that work for you if you had to deal with similar circumstances.
- ☐ **Private Locke found training to be a bit more difficult than he expected. In fact, he failed some of his evaluations. He cannot understand why he is having such a hard time because he thinks of himself as a strong, capable person.**



- ☐ **What are two ways that Private Locke could make sense of his struggle to do well in the Army National Guard?**

# Module Activity#2

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- ❑ During her deployment, Sergeant Chen has not had as much contact with her husband and children as she would like. She often feels very distant from them and wonders if they miss her. It doesn't seem fair that she has to be separated from her family.



- ❑ Think of two ways Sergeant Chen could make sense of her loneliness.
- ❑ Be sure to explain specific ways that she could use the strategies.

# Module Activity#3

- ❑ During a firefight with an enemy combatant who took cover in a civilian neighborhood, Lieutenant Martinez accidentally killed a civilian. He is feeling guilty because he has violated his own belief that killing innocent people is wrong.



- ❑ What are two ways that Lieutenant Martinez could make sense of this tragedy?
- ❑ Be sure to explain specific ways that he could use the strategies.



# Module Activity#4

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- ☐ SFC Dixon has seen a lot of suffering and death on the battlefield. She sometimes thinks the world is an unfair, cruel place, but she wants to believe that this is not true.



- ☐ Pick two ways that SFC Dixon could think about her experiences.
- ☐ Be sure to explain specific ways that she could use the strategies.



# Take Away



Think about  
challenging situations  
and ways you can  
make meaning to get  
through life.

You will grow as a  
Soldier and be able to  
make it through even  
the most intense  
challenges.

Always remember to  
look for positive ways  
to understand your  
experiences.



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